

# ***Briefing Report***

## **Depredation Hunt Ordered in Fremont County to Harvest Escaped Domestic Elk**

Following direction from the Governor as outlined in Executive Order 2006-32, personnel from the Idaho Department of Fish & Game and Idaho State Department of Agriculture have been harvesting escaped domestic elk from Fremont County. Between September 9 and September 15, agency personnel removed 15 domestic elk. The Executive Order further directed the Idaho Fish and Game Commission to implement rules allowing licensed hunters and private landowners to assist in removal of domestic elk. Director Huffaker will order an emergency depredation hunt to be implemented effective September 19<sup>th</sup>. The emergency depredation hunt will allow private landowners within the hunt area and randomly selected hunters in possession of Teton Zone elk tags to participate.

### Objectives

- ✓ Minimize commingling of domestic and wild elk.
- ✓ Fulfill direction provided by Governor's Executive Order 2006-32.
- ✓ Enlist assistance from sportsmen and private landowners.
- ✓ Implement a safe, orderly, and effective depredation hunt.

### Hunt Area

- ✓ The northeast portion of Game Management Unit 62 near Conant Creek (see attached maps).
- ✓ To prevent conflict with private landowners, public hunters will be restricted to public land. Private landowners within the hunt area are eligible to hunt private and public land.

### Licensed Hunters

- ✓ Randomly selected from hunters possessing Teton Zone elk tags.
- ✓ Hunters will be issued a letter (attached) and map authorizing their participation.
- ✓ 50 hunters selected for each sequential hunt.
- ✓ Sequential hunts: 9/19 – 9/25, 9/26 – 10/2, 10/3 – 10/14. Additional hunts if needed.
- ✓ Restricted to public land.
- ✓ Hunters not possessing Teton Zone elk tags can contact the Idaho Falls Fish & Game office to be put on a list, in case additional hunters are needed.

### Landowners

- ✓ All landowners within the hunt area will be contacted directly.
- ✓ Landowners willing to participate will be provided a letter (attached) and elk tag at no charge.
- ✓ Landowners may designate their tag, without fee or compensation, to another person.
- ✓ Eligible to hunt private and public land.

### Take of Domestic Elk

- ✓ Adult domestic elk identified by the presence of a USDA metal ear tag. Calf domestic elk are not ear-tagged, but identified by close association with an adult domestic elk.
- ✓ No limit on take or possession.
- ✓ Hunters required to report within 3 business days.
- ✓ Hunters not required to validate their elk tag.

### Take of Wild Elk

- ✓ Adult wild elk identified by the lack of a USDA metal ear tag. Calf wild elk identified by not being associated with an adult domestic elk.
- ✓ Limit of 1 wild elk.
- ✓ Hunters required to validate their elk tag.

### Biological Sample Collection

- ✓ Hunters requested to provide biological samples from both wild and domestic elk.
- ✓ Samples collected by officers in the field, Billy Joe's Taxidermy in Tetonia, and the Idaho Falls Fish & Game office.
- ✓ Elk will be evaluated/tested for tuberculosis, brucellosis, chronic wasting disease, other diseases/parasites of concern to wild populations, and genetic makeup.
- ✓ Genetic testing pending federal approval for international transport of biological samples (e.g. lab at University of Saskatchewan).
- ✓ Test results available between 2 – 14 days, depending on type of test, from submission.
- ✓ Hunters harvesting an elk testing positive for a disease with known human health concerns will be contacted immediately.

### Hunter Safety

- ✓ The Director will order an emergency closure (attached) of an on-going archery hunt within the hunt area.
- ✓ Hunter numbers are limited.

### Impacts to Wild Elk Population

- ✓ Depredation hunt will result in an unfortunate, but unavoidable, reduction in wild elk.
- ✓ Limiting hunters to those possessing Teton Zone elk tags minimizes excessive harvest.
- ✓ Restrictive hunt area minimizes excessive harvest.

### Monitoring & Contingency Plans

- ✓ Department staff will monitor hunts.
- ✓ Contingency plans, including additional emergency depredation hunts and winter trapping, are being developed and will be implemented if necessary.

### Department Costs

- ✓ Department is documenting all associated costs.
- ✓ Current Department efforts are being funded by sportsmen dollars (e.g. license funds, federal aid).
- ✓ Currently, the Department has no plans for recuperating costs.